

CAMPING AND CHARACTER

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Last year there were one million boys and girls in camps in America, involving an expenditure of approximately \$100,000,000.00 by their parents. From this fact it would seem that the summer camp needs little argument to justify itself with most thinking parents. The vital question is which camp - and why. This question leads us naturally to a survey of the objectives of the camps we may have under consideration.

There is quite a general shift in the emphasis of many camps from the purely recreational to the educational. When we realize that the boy or girl who is in camp for seven weeks is actually there more hours than are spent in school the balance of the year, the tremendous educational possibilities are seen. Educators are beginning to discover the summer camp and are checking its methods to see whether good educational processes are being used. Parents are eager to have their children acquire valuable skills and good attitudes and habits so that the summer months may be something more than a period of retreat from realities. Boys and girls themselves are enthusiastic about this type of camp, for learning that is secured through individual interests never needs artificial stimulus.

Another shift in emphasis is the plan to devote much more time to the camper as an individual rather than as a member of a group. Every child has a great capacity for development socially and emotionally. Camp provides a unified and controlled complete life experience for the period the child is there. It gives a chance for close intimacy of leaders and directors with the camper and gives opportunity for constant observation and helpful counsel.

This brings us to the fundamental requirement for camps aiming to secure the best results in the lives of their campers. This is leadership and supervision. It is not enough for a leader or councillor to have some campcraft ability and a knowledge of educational processes. He must be of irreproachable character, like to work with growing youth, and give unsparingly of his time to "buddy" with his group. To do his best work a leader should not have more than eight or nine campers in his cabin. What takes place in this small group is all-important in striving for desirable character results. Recent studies have clearly shown that mature college students or college graduates can more efficiently guide and challenge boys and girls to the best values in the camp life.

Camp Kern, the Dayton Y.M.C.A. Camp for Boys opened its twentieth season on June 15th and closed August 19th. The wooded camp site lying not far from Fort Ancient, home of the mound-builders, is of great beauty. The Little Miami River is used for swimming, boating, and canoeing.

The old belief that boys had to endure all manner of physical discomfort to make them "hard" and give them a real camping experience, has long since been shattered. Camp Kern has endeavored to supply enough of the comforts without destroying the rugged, natural setting. There are rustic cabins for living quarters equipped with lockers for clothing, a large recreation and dining lodge with fireplace and piano, a modern sanitary system, automatic dishwasher, electric lights and refrigeration. Athletic facilities include tennis courts, baseball fields, volleyball court, archery range, quoits pits, swimming areas, rowboats, and canoes.

The health and safety of campers are kept constantly in mind. Dr. Robert Blair of Lebanon, the consulting camp physician, is within twenty minutes of Camp Kern. Each boy is given a physical examination before entering camp. A well-stocked First Aid kit is always available for emergencies. Drinking water and milk are analyzed by the Dayton Board of Health each year and have been uniformly satisfactory. Waterfront safety is

guarded by an adequate number of life-guards on the shore and in boats.

Mature college students or college graduates, who are selected and trained for their work, compose the leadership staff. They are prepared to instruct in nature study, woodcraft, archery, leather craft, clay modelling, athletics, aquatics, first aid, life-saving, music, dramatics, journalism, as well as coaching in tennis, basketball, volleyball, track and tumbling. Included in the ¹⁹²⁹staff were Robert Craven, graduate, Ohio State University, and Manual Arts instructor in Dayton Schools; Harold Prugh and James Ingram, Heidelberg College; Robert Erisman, graduate, and David Allaman, James Harris and Jack Appleton, Otterbein College; Craig Bollman, Oberlin College; Albert Bakeman, graduate, Denison University; and Frank Williams, Swarthmore College.

Camp Kern is non-sectarian and enrolls boys of all faiths. The essential religious elements are taken into account in the daily program but do not conflict with church instruction. Rather the camp seeks to reinforce all the character training of the school and church and the best place of all for building character - the home.